

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-03 USIA-15 PRS-01

NSC-10 L-03 CU-04 AID-20 PC-04 OPR-02 NIC-01 RSR-01

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P 272245Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0411

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 3639

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS

SUBJECT: STRIKING TEACHERS HOLD DEMONSTRATION; GOG REMAINS FIRM
IN ITS POSITION

REF: A. GUATEMALA 3590

B. A-153

SUMMARY: ON JULY 26, ABOUT 3,000 STRIKING TEACHERS, STUDENTS,
AND SOME ORGANIZED LABOR ALLIES ATTEMPTED TO DEMONSTRATE
IN FRONT OF NATIONAL PALACE. NATIONAL POLICE RIOT SQUAD
PREVENTED DEMONSTRATION, BREAKING IT UP WITH TEAR GAS AND
NIGHT STICKS. TEACHERS AND ALLIES WITHDREW AND
NO SERIOUS VIOLENCE RESULTED. GOG HAS ISSUED STATEMENTS
CONNECTING TEACHERS TO SUBVERSIVE GROUPS WHILE MAINTAINING
POSITION THAT IT WILL NOT GRANT LARGER WAGE INCREASES.
ATTEMPTS AT STAGING ANOTHER
DEMONSTRATION THIS MORNING (JULY27) WERE FOILED BY POLICE WHO BROKE
UP GROUPS BEFORE THEY COULD FORM, USING MINIMAL FORCE.
END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE GOG ANNOUNCED LEVELS OF WAGE INCREASES FOR
TEACHERS ON JULY 16 (SEE A-153) OF ABOUT 10 PERCENT AND
TEACHERS' LEADERS (THE FNM) REJECTED THIS POSITION,
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GOG HAS ATTEMPTED TO DEAL WITH SITUATION BY FOSTERING DIVISION

AMONG VARIOUS GROUPS INVOLVED, INTIMIDATING LEADERS, AND ALIENATING MOVEMENT FROM PUBLIC OPINION BY CONNECTING IT WITH SUBVERSIVE POLITICAL GROUPS AND EMPHASIZING HARM DONE TO STUDENTS AFFECTED BY CLOSED SCHOOLS. ON JULY 20, GOG ISSUED CLARIFICATION OF JULY 16 WAGE INCREASE ANNOUNCEMENT TO SHOW THAT WAGE INCREASE WAS MORE THAN 10 PERCENT. FNM LEADERS HAVE RECEIVED THREATS EMANATING FROM GROUP STYLED ESCUADRON DE LA MUERTE, BUT EDUCATION MINISTER ALEJANDRO MALDONADO PUBLICLY REPUDIATED USE OF COERCION. FINALLY, GOG FIRST ANNOUNCED THAT TEACHERS NOT ON JOB BY JULY 25 WOULD NOT BE PAID FOR ENTIRE MONTH OF JULY, BUT THEN SHIFTED CUT OFF TO JULY 31.

2. FNM MEANWHILE HAS ACCEPTED SUPPORT FROM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (AEU) AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR GROUP (CNT). AEU DIRECTORATE HELD JULY 18 MEETING (REPORTED IN PRESS WITH PHOTO SHOWING PROMINENT PORTRAITS OF "CHE" GUEVARA, MARX, LENIN, MAO, ETC. ON AEU WALLS) WITH FNM AND CNT AUTHORIZING FULL SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS. AT JULY 24 MASS RALLY ON SAN CARLOS UNIVERSITY (USC) CAMPUS, AEU LEADERS STIRRED UP STUDENTS FOR PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION JULY 26. FNM AND AEU CLAIMED 16,000 WOULD JOIN MARCH ON NATIONAL PALACE.

3. GOG REFUSED TO GIVE LEGAL AUTHORIZATION TO HOLD MARCH AND PUBLISHED DOCUMENT ON JULY 25 ASSERTING THAT TEACHERS' MOVEMENT WAS NOW WHOLLY POLITICAL, CONNECTED WITH SUBVERSIVES, AND WARNED TEACHERS TO DESIST. PHOTO SHOWING PORTRAITS OF COMMUNIST SAINTS AT AEU HEADQUARTERS REPUBLISHED AS PROOF OF CONNECTIONS.

4. EARLY ON JULY 26, TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND SOME CNT ACTIVISTS (NUMBERING 3,000 ACCORDING TO PRESS) ATTEMPTED TO MARCH ON CENTRAL PARK IN FRONT OF NATIONAL PALACE. NATIONAL POLICE RIOT SQUAD BLOCKED PATH AND FORCED CROWD TO DISPERSE WITH TEAR GAS AND NIGHT STICKS. NO OTHER WEAPONS USED AND ONLY INJURIES REPORTED WERE BRUISED HEADS. RETREATING DEMONSTRATORS SPREAD TACKS ALONG SIXTH AVENUE IN ZONE 1 BUT ENGAGED IN NO OTHER
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VIOLENT ACTION. POLICE ARRESTED APPROXIMATELY 30 DEMONSTRATORS, WHO WERE IMMEDIATELY TURNED OVER TO COURTS.

5. SMALL GROUPS GATHERED ELSEWHERE IN CITY IN CONNECTION WITH DEMONSTRATION BUT NO CONFRONTATIONS ERUPTED WITH POLICE. WE UNDERSTAND AEU HAS CALLED ANOTHER MASS MEETING FOR TODAY AT USC TO CONSIDER

FURTHER ACTION.

6. ON AFTERNOON OF DEMONSTRATION, LEADERS OF FNM MET WITH EDUCATION MINISTER MALDONADO TO DISCUSS GOG POSITION ON WAGES. FNM PROPOSED THAT WAGE INCREASE BE RAISED TO 25 PERCENT FOR PRIMARY LEVEL TEACHERS AND A "LESSER PERCENTAGE" FOR SECONDARY TEACHERS. FNM SUGGESTED INCREASE COULD BE FUNDED WITHOUT FURTHER DRAIN ON GOG BUDGET BY ELIMINATING NEW FRINGE BENEFITS GRANTED BY GOG ON JULY 16. MALDONADO TOLD FNM HE HAD NO POWER TO GRANT GREATER INCREASE BUT PROMISED TO SUBMIT NEW FNM POSITION TO REST OF GOG.

7. DEMONSTRATORS ATTEMPTED TO GATHER IN CENTRAL PARK AGAIN THIS MORNING, BUT WERE DISPERSED BY POLICE WITH MINIMAL USE OF FORCE BEFORE LARGE GROUPS COULD FORM. COMMENT: TEACHERS' MOVEMENT FOR HIGHER WAGES HAS NOW BECOME A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL HEADACHE FOR GOG. FACT THAT TEACHERS HAVE NOW MOVED TO PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH INCLUDE STUDENT AND LABOR GROUPS IS ALL THE MORE DISCONCERTING BECAUSE IT COMES JUST AFTER PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF MLN LEADER MARIO SANDOVAL'S CONTROVERSIAL PRIVATE MEMORANDUM TO CLEMENTE MARROQUIN (GUATEMALA 3590) WHICH HAS CLOUDED POLITICAL SCENE. GOG AT THIS JUNCTURE SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO MAINTAIN FIRM POSITION WITHOUT PRODUCING A MARTYR. IF IT IS SUCCESSFUL, SITUATION COULD WELL CALM DOWN. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, ANYONE IS KILLED ON EITHER SIDE, THIS COULD SET OFF CHAIN REACTION AND CAUSE SERIOUS DETERIORATION OF SECURITY SITUATION.
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